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SUBJECT: IRAQI DFM VIEWS ON TURKEY/PKK

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Classified By: POL-MIL MINISTER-COUNSELOR MARCIE B. RIES, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶11. (S) SUMMARY: At an October 30 meeting with Political-Military Minister-Counselor, Deputy Foreign Minister Labeed Abbawi related his concerns regarding the current PKK crisis and addressed items including Syria, Iran, and the Neighbors Process. He suspected that the Turkish military intended to mount an extensive cross-border operation reaching beyond the area used by the PKK. The GOI had signaled to Turkey its assent to a limited operation targeting the PKK to Turkey, but could not accept Turkish military action beyond this. Further actions against the PKK would be possible if Turkey would provide more information to the GOI and engage with the KRG. President Talabani had passed a peace feeler from the PKK to FM Babacan on October ¶23. Abbawi predicted that the Turkish hostages would be freed in one or two days through the efforts of the KRG. Pol-Mil M/C emphasized the need to continue GOI-GOT dialogue and for concrete action from the KRG. Abbawi agreed to raise the topic of scheduling another trilateral with Iran during FM Mottaki's visit and to invite Syrian participation in the November 15 reopening of the Al Qaim border crossing. The Neighbors Ministerial Communiqué? needed work, but a concept for a support mechanism for the Neighbors Process had been agreed by the GOI and the UN. END SUMMARY

ANGST ABOUT ANKARA

¶12. (S) Deputy Foreign Minister Labeed Abbawi began his October 30 meeting with Pol-Mil Minister-Counselor by relating his impressions from his October 26 visit to Ankara as part of an Iraqi delegation sent to discuss the PKK with the GOT. Abbawi opined that authority to make decisions regarding the PKK crisis had now passed from the Turkish government to the Turkish military, which was using the situation in order to regain domestic political standing. Abbawi expressed his belief that the Turks intend to mount a cross-border operation which would go far beyond the mountainous areas used by the PKK, moving through Kurdish towns as far south as Irbil using mechanized forces. They would use the pretext of attacking PKK logistical bases to justify this extensive cross-border operation.

DRAWING THE LINE, BUT READY FOR DIALOGUE

13. (S) Abbawi confided that the GOI had signaled its assent to Turkish action against PKK camps in northern Iraq to FM Babacan when he visited Baghdad October 23. Strikes against such bases would be &no problem.⁸ It was unacceptable, however, for Turkish forces to move beyond those areas.

Pol-Mil M/C expressed concern that the GOI's initial approach, treating the PKK as a mutual problem for Iraq and Turkey to solve, was now veering in the direction of confrontation. Bringing in outsiders as the GOI was seeking to do would only accelerate this trend. Pol-Mil M/C emphasized that, in order to head off a confrontation, both the GOI and GOT should maintain a diplomatic dialogue. Abbawi indicated that the GOI was ready to renew a direct dialogue if the GOT agreed to treat the Iraqi delegation with respect and if the GOT was willing to engage in a dialogue rather than merely present its views without allowing the Iraqis the dignity of a reply.

GOI WILLING TO ACT, HOSTAGES TO BE FREE SOON

14. (S) Abbawi outlined actions which the GOI was prepared to implement against the PKK: its camps could be closed pursuant to the Iraq-Turkey Counterterrorism Agreement when the legal process had been followed, and PKK members could be extradited if the GOI were presented with proof and had the leaders in its custody, which it did not. On a more optimistic note, Abbawi seemed confident that the eight Turkish hostages would be released in one or two days through the efforts of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

PKK PEACE FEELER

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15. (S) He related that President Talabani had passed a letter from the PKK to FM Babacan October 23 that contained an offer by the PKK to surrender their arms to the United States in exchange for an amnesty by the GOT; PKK leaders would be allowed to leave while rank and file would return to Turkey. Abbawi indicated that this was not the first such letter which the PKK had relayed to Turkey through GOI officials.

MESSAGE TO TURKEY: TALK TO THE KRG

16. (S) KRG President Barzani was prepared to establish checkpoints to prevent PKK movements, to institute joint patrols with Turkish forces, and to send Peshmerga to secure the border against PKK incursions, if Turkey would negotiate with him, related Abbawi. Turkey could not stay on their high horse, insisting on action without committing itself to political engagement with the Kurds. Abbawi concluded his discussion of the PKK by pleading for President Bush to convey a clear message not to interfere in Iraq to PM Erdogan during his November 5 White House visit. Pol-Mil M/C made clear that Barzani needed to deliver on something tangible and visible, such as actually setting up checkpoints, and not just talk about taking action. Pol-Mil M/C explained to Abbawi that the real beneficiary of the current crisis atmosphere was the PKK itself, which could use anxiety among Kurds to rally support for its cause.

IRAN: TRILATERAL, CONSULATES

17. (S/NF) Pol-Mil M/C requested that Abbawi arrange a follow-up meeting of the U.S.-Iraq-Iran Trilateral Security Subcommittee in two weeks. Abbawi promised to raise this with Iranian FM Mottaki when he visits Baghdad on October 31.

When asked about the status of the planned opening of the Iranian consulates in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah, Abbawi indicated that the Irbil consulate had already opened and

that its consul general had been accredited to the GOI and was already in residence. The Sulaymaniyah consulate's prospective consul general was already in Iraq, although it had yet to open. Pol-Mil M/C reminded Abbawi of FM Zebari's promise (reftel) to share the names of Iranian staff at these consulates to identify IRGC officers using diplomatic cover.

NEIGHBORS PROCESS: COMMUNIQUE, SUPPORT MECHANISM

¶8. (S) Abbawi explained that the GOI desired numerous changes to the Neighbors Ministerial communique which he wanted to iron out on November 1 with S/I Satterfield or Ambassador Crocker before the senior officials meeting. He indicated that the communique should establish dates for the next round of working group meetings, but that locations might be agreed on later. He reported that the GOI and the UN had agreed on a concept for a support mechanism to facilitate the Neighbors Process. The GOI had made only two changes to the UN-proposed draft: one requiring that the mechanism reside inside the Iraqi MFA with an Iraqi and a UN official co-leading, and another expanding the remit of the border security working group to include security writ large. The proposal for a support mechanism would be included in the Istanbul documents.

AL QAIM, UNSCR

¶9. (C) Pol-Mil M/C asked whether the GOI had contacted Syria regarding the planned November 15 reopening of the border crossing at Al Qaim. Abbawi promised to speak to the Syrians about this in Istanbul and to invite a Syrian delegation to attend the reopening. Pol-Mil M/C notified Abbawi that the U.S. was beginning the process of renewing UNSCR 1723.

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